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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

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Friday, 12 January 1996, 3.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Sir John Weston	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Legwaila
	Chile	Mr. Somavia
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Henze
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Mano Queta
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Sriyono
	Italy	Mr. Ferrarin
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	United States of America	Mr. Inderfurth

Agenda

The situation in Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1996/5)

96-85044 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Georgia

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1996/5)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Georgia, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, document S/1996/5.

Members of the Council also have before them document S/1996/16, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/1996/9, which contains the text of a letter dated 8 January 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The first speaker is the representative of Georgia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Chkheidze (Georgia): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on assuming the functions of President of the Security Council for this month. We believe that under your skilful guidance, the Security Council will successfully continue to fulfil its difficult and responsible task.

Allow me also sincerely to congratulate the five new members on their election to the Security Council. I wish to express the hope that their efforts will add a new impetus to the important work of this body.

On behalf of my Government and the people of Georgia, I should like to extend warmest words of appreciation to the United Nations, its Security Council and, personally, to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, as well as to his Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, and his Deputy, Mr. Bota, for the attention and good will they have accorded the dramatic processes in Georgia.

I should like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the group of countries known as Friends of Georgia and to the Russian Federation as facilitator for their tireless efforts to bring about a comprehensive political settlement of the protracted conflict in my country.

Allow me also to commend the joint activities being carried out by the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and the peace-keeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in monitoring the cease-fire, as well as their efforts to facilitate the repatriation of thousands of refugees.

Today the Security Council is once again in session to deliberate on the situation in Georgia. Any decision whatsoever adopted in this Chamber is of paramount importance for the Government of my country. The awareness of the constant care and attention accorded to Georgia by the international community inspires hope for the ultimate triumph of justice. The firm position of the Security Council regarding the developments in the troubled region of Georgia has repeatedly thwarted the aspirations of the separatists to divide the country and to put its sovereignty in question. The Georgian people are gratified by the strong stand of the Council against any manifestation of separatism and for political and material support for Georgia's efforts to overcome this crisis.

Having experienced bitter lessons of history, the Georgian Government has always ascribed special importance to the meaning of peace and sought to bring stability and balance to the Caucasus region.

It has become clear that the objective of establishing market-oriented and democratic principles cannot be attained solely by declarations of good will and the dissemination of truthful information about the processes in the region. Indisputably, the process of the world's political change is not yet completed. It has just reached its most painful phase.

The conflict in Abkhazia is only a part of the scheme conceived by the henchmen of totalitarian revenge. Unfortunately, due to economic, political and geographical factors, the Caucasus has turned into the main theatre of these dramatic developments.

Is it possible to forget that not so long ago the leaders of the Abkhaz separatists joined those who attempted to save the Soviet empire and were the most active members of the notorious radical grouping known as Soyuz? Equipped with communist slogans, separatists provoked the confrontation and then turned it into a lasting ethnic conflict.

Abkhaz separatists stubbornly continue to intimidate the civilian population through kidnappings, tortures and summary executions. People are deprived of minimal living conditions and struggle to survive in abject poverty and humiliation. Their victims are not only Georgians, but also those Abkhazis who have realized the true motive of the conflict and have condemned the adventurist policies of the separatists.

Despite the resolutions of the Security Council calling for the unconditional return of refugees to their homes to be ensured, only a small group of displaced persons has managed to return to the region of Gali. They live particularly unprotected, under the constant threat of being executed or of being evicted from their homes for ever.

On January 5, 1996 in the village of Sheshleti in the Gali region, Abkhaz boeviks brutally tortured and killed innocent civilians, Mr. Sanaia and six members of his family, including his wife, children and grandchildren. Mr. Sanaia's two neighbours, who had come to prevent the massacre, were also executed on the spot. In carrying out this barbaric act, the separatists once again overrode numerous resolutions of the Security Council and ignored the presence of the United Nations observers and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping forces in the region. It is clear that by being represented at different international levels, leaders of the separatists promote their names and drag out peace negotiations. They are trying their best to transform the Abkhaz conflict into a Balkan-like conflagration.

The Georgian Government has always been committed to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, for we realize that only a negotiated settlement of the dispute can meet the interests of my people and those of the international community. The adherence of the Georgian population to this course was reflected in the presidential and parliamentary elections held in Georgia on 5 November 1995. At the same time, numerous breaches of agreements by the Abkhaz side, violations of the provisions of Security Council resolutions and attempts to ignore, evade and negotiate away their obligations have brought us to the conclusion that peace has to be enforced. The enforcement of peace was the only solution for Bosnia and the same is likely to be true for the Caucasus.

The recent massacre in the Gali region provokes pain and resentment. The President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, has expressed his deep concern over this tragic incident and stressed that it was aimed at hampering the peace process and at the institutionalization of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide against Georgians in the Abkhaz region.

On behalf of my President, today I appeal to the Security Council to assist us by using its capacity to stop further bloodshed and restore peace in Georgia. We deeply hope that the members of the Security Council, all interested parties, will once again seriously consider the situation in my country and will take necessary measures to prevent the imminent escalation of this dispute.

The President: I thank the representative of Georgia for his kind words addressed to me.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution (S/1996/16) before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Henze (Germany): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, upon your assumption of the presidency of the Council. I am sure that the experience you bring to this task will be of great help in our work

and I can only pledge that we will cooperate with you. At the same time, I would like to thank Ambassador Lavrov and his delegation for the excellent work they did in the presidency of the Council last month. Since my knowledge of English is limited, and German, I regret to say, is not an official language of the Council, I will refrain from poetical efforts and simply say how much we admired Ambassador Lavrov's efforts to speed up the work of the Council, and I am glad to see that you are trying very efficiently to follow his example.

Let me briefly comment at the outset on a development which, until now, has been discussed only in our informal consultations and say that my Government is deeply disturbed about the recent fighting in Liberia. We understand that Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), while deploying its forces throughout the country, was attacked by one of the warring factions in the Tubmanburg area. In these attacks, ECOMOG suffered a considerable number of casualties. We strongly condemn any attacks on peace-keeping forces such as ECOMOG. We would furthermore like to extend our deep condolences to the Governments involved in ECOMOG and the families of the victims.

The excellent and comprehensive report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, has provided us with a clear picture and a solid basis for our decision on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for another six months. The draft resolution before us incorporates numerous and valuable contributions by many Council members. It is, I am convinced, well balanced and comprehensive. It is clear and unambiguous in pointing at those responsible for the deadlock in the political negotiation process and specific in what we expect from the Abkhaz side.

This is why Germany will vote in favour of the draft resolution. It is understood that the resolution will eventually have to be reviewed in the light of the results of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit meeting scheduled for 19 January.

My Government believes that it is imperative to quickly put an end to the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. Peace can be achieved only by a mutually satisfactory compromise on the basis of full respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and in the framework of the newly adopted Constitution of the Republic of Georgia. The new Georgian Constitution gives ample room for a federative arrangement for Abkhazia, and I am convinced that this is the direction the Head of State and the Government of the Republic of Georgia are willing to go. It is the Abkhaz side that is clearly responsible for the virtual standstill in the negotiating process.

I hope and believe that the draft resolution on which we shall take action today will convince the Abkhaz side that all Council members are unambiguous in their commitment to the full territorial integrity of Georgia. Nobody in Abkhazia should expect that the international community will change this fundamental position or come to support the refusal to conduct meaningful negotiations. A fundamental rethinking on the Abkhaz side is imperative, and the impatience of the Council is growing. Ethnic killings and the creation of an atmosphere of violence and insecurity in order to discourage the return of refugees and displaced persons are totally unacceptable to the international community. The results of so-called ethnic cleansing will not be accepted or recognized. This is the message we want to get across to the Abkhaz side.

My Government is equally concerned about the humanitarian situation in the territories under Abkhaz control, as well as among the 250,000 refugees and displaced persons who have been forced out of their homes. There has been little real progress in this area, due mainly to the unchanged political situation and the uncooperative stance of the Abkhaz authorities. We welcome the fact that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been able to resume its presence in the Gali region.

Let me stress that Germany fully and wholeheartedly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at a comprehensive political settlement, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator. Both the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, and his resident Deputy, Ambassador Bota, are to be commended for their dedicated work in a difficult situation. We will be very interested to hear their proposals on possible ways to bring the conflict closer to a peaceful solution in spite of the discouraging situation we are facing right now. The Russian Federation's efforts as facilitator are equally indispensable; Russia seems best equipped to make the Abkhaz side actually listen. I would like to use this opportunity to thank also the members of UNOMIG for the important work they have carried out in the field, in close and good cooperation with the peace-keeping units of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to which we also pay tribute.

While we fully support what UNOMIG is doing on the ground, we are uneasy about the possible prospect of renewing UNOMIG's mandate time and again without any tangible political progress. We do not wish to contribute to the perpetuation of the present situation in Abkhazia; rather, we see UNOMIG as a valuable instrument to generate a meaningful and effective peace process. It is with this understanding that Germany supports the extension of the UNOMIG mandate for another six months.

The President: I thank the representative of Germany for the kind words he addressed to me.

I am sure that the whole Council would want to associate itself with the words of condolence expressed by the representative of Germany to the families of those killed or injured in the recent tragic outburst of violence in Liberia.

Mr. Ferrarin (Italy): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, upon your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I am fully confident that, with your experience and your diplomatic skill, you will conduct our work in an entirely successful manner. Please be assured of the complete cooperation and support of the Italian delegation.

At the same time, I want to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Lavrov and his delegation for the outstanding way in which that representative guided the work of the Council during the month of December.

Italy will vote in favour of the draft resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). We believe that its contents give a clear and firm indication of the Security Council's position on the question of Abkhazia, Georgia.

We agree that there is a need to establish the basic political conditions to support the negotiations. The parties, and particularly the Abkhaz leadership, need to step up their efforts to find a comprehensive solution to the crisis based on the principles long affirmed by the Council relating to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The parliamentary elections of November 1995, of which the Council would rightly take note, are a positive element, especially considering President Shevardnadze's statement of 26 November 1995, which clearly expressed the Georgian Government's willingness to find a balanced and reasonable constitutional solution. My delegation's support for the draft resolution is based also on the growing concern it would voice over the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia, particularly in the Gali region.

We were shocked at the news provided by the Permanent Representative of Georgia regarding the events of 5 January in Sheshleti. These events unfortunately seem to confirm an increasing climate of violence, as noted in the Secretary-General's report, which describes the operations of the Abkhaz military in the Gali region in early November.

In this context, UNOMIG's activities must not contribute to an indefinite paralysis of the situation. On the contrary, thanks to effective and constructive collaboration with the forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), UNOMIG should continue to play a dynamic role. One wonders what might have happened in early November, for example, had it not been for the vigilance of observers and peace-keepers in the Gali region. UNOMIG's role should help to restore a climate of security that will finally make it possible to settle the crucial problem of the return of refugees.

In this regard, the close collaboration between UNOMIG, the UNHCR and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) represents a positive element in a general context that, unfortunately, does not carry much promise of a breakthrough, as the Secretary-General's report underlines. Nevertheless, the United Nations, the Russian facilitator and the OSCE must pursue their efforts: other crises that were once considered intractable have ultimately yielded to peace agreements, and the Abkhaz question too can be settled by following the difficult road of negotiation.

The President: I thank the representative of Italy for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to extend my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his excellent stewardship last month.

As a new member of the Security Council, my delegation would like to acknowledge the commendable efforts of the Council thus far to bring about a comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia. I acknowledge in particular the efforts of the countries that

comprise the Friends of Georgia. We note the valuable contribution of the Russian Federation as facilitator; that country has striven with commitment and resolve to create an atmosphere for optimal dialogue and compromise between the two parties concerned. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative report on recent developments in the region. Finally, we offer special thanks to Ambassador Brunner, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and to Mr. Bota, his resident Deputy and Head of Mission of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), as well as to the personnel under his command, for their dedication and perseverance in carrying out, under difficult conditions, the tasks entrusted to them by the Council.

My delegation would also like to express its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict, including the question of the future status of Abkhazia. Given the historical realities of this issue, my delegation recognizes the need for Abkhazia to possess a certain degree of autonomy. However, as the Security Council has reiterated on various occasions, any settlement of the conflict must be based upon the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

Given our deep concern over the lack of progress in the political discussions to date, we stand ever hopeful that the Abkhaz side will adopt a more flexible and realistic approach to this question so that a timely and acceptable outcome for both sides may be reached.

As we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century, in which humanity is determined to create a more peaceful and just world, I believe that the disintegrative trend, accompanied by acts of brute violence and destruction, as witnessed in some parts of the world, should not find any rightful place in the new era. Despite the fact that there have been no armed confrontations between the two parties recently, the ongoing impasse in the political process and the continued reports of criminal activity, such as looting, beatings and torture, particularly in the Gali region, have been a source of grave concern and distress.

The plight of refugees and displaced persons in the region is particularly worrisome. Given the enormous hardship inflicted upon them in the harsh winter season, my delegation urges the early resolution of this dire situation as soon as possible.

We are especially troubled by the obstruction posed by the Abkhaz side to the expeditious return of the refugees and displaced persons to their place of origin in Abkhazia, and we thus strongly call upon the Abkhaz authorities to accede to a pragmatic timetable and to expedite the process of voluntary return, in accordance with the procedures proposed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under the Quadripartite Agreement.

Moreover, my delegation calls upon the parties to further cooperate with UNOMIG, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping force and the UNHCR to create an environment conducive to the return of refugees and displaced persons.

We would like to convey our deep appreciation to UNOMIG for its contributions to containing the situation in Abkhazia, and we also commend the close cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force.

As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, it is indeed regrettable that the requisite ingredients for a full solution are not yet at hand and that a political settlement remains tenuous. The reality of the situation clearly warrants a continued presence by UNOMIG in the quest for peace in Georgia.

The Republic of Korea's participation in UNOMIG is an expression of its strong commitment to the United Nations effort to achieve a lasting political settlement in Abkhazia, Georgia, and I take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to this end.

In light of these considerations, my delegation is pleased to vote in favour of the extension of the UNOMIG mandate for an additional six months, ending 12 July 1996, under the stipulations contained in paragraph 11 of the draft resolution.

Before concluding, I would like to stress that throughout its membership in the Security Council, the Republic of Korea, as demonstrated since its fairly recent admission to the United Nations, will be staunchly prepared to make the most meaningful and productive contributions possible towards the realization of the goals enshrined in the Charter, particularly in the field of international peace and security.

The President: I thank the Representative of Korea for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Matuszewski (Poland): It gives me great pleasure indeed to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January.

I would also like to ask Ambassador Lavrov to accept the assurances of my delegation's deep appreciation for the excellent manner in which he presided over the Council in December 1995.

The Polish delegation remains concerned over the situation in Abkhazia. It may be concluded, on the basis of the reports of the Secretary-General, including the last one, that the most appropriate words to describe both the substance and the pace of the process of normalization in the area are "deadlock" and "unchanged". Moreover, the continuing acts of human rights violations against the Georgian population, and the recent killings strengthen the view that more efforts are needed to achieve a genuine breakthrough in the situation.

The political aspects of the normalization continue to determine the chances for progress in all other areas. The picture presented in the Secretary-General's latest report is rather a bleak one. We sincerely encourage all parties concerned — and especially the Abkhaz side — to do all they can in order to achieve a comprehensive political solution.

We believe that last year's presidential and parliamentary elections in Georgia, while greatly contributing to the process of democratic evolution in that country, create a more propitious climate for addressing the outstanding issues in the conflict. We refer in particular to President Shevardnadze's comments on the constitutional arrangements in Georgia in his inaugural address.

The humanitarian situation in the conflict area is of particular concern for the delegation of Poland. We regret the lack of positive changes in this regard and call upon all the parties concerned to alleviate the situation — and not just on a temporary basis — in the first place, by committing themselves to full and unequivocal fulfilment of their obligations. Again, our appeal is addressed in particular to the Abkhaz side, which is expected to better its record with regard to the process of return of refugees and displaced persons, as stipulated in the draft.

The United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) continues to be an indispensable element of the situation in Abkhazia. That is why we are in favour of the extension of the mandate, although the situation that I referred to earlier in my statement would warrant a cautious approach in the face of further delays in the peace process.

In conclusion, let me extend words of appreciation to the Secretary-General and his envoys to the region for their efforts to resolve the conflict, as well as to the Russian Federation for its assistance as facilitator.

Finally, we wish to pay tribute to the personnel of UNOMIG and its Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) partner in the area.

The President: I thank the representative of Poland for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, allow me, Sir, to join others in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January and to express the readiness of our delegation to support you in all possible ways in your work.

On behalf of the Russian delegation, I should like to express profound condolences for the tragic death of peaceable inhabitants of the village of Sheshleti on 5 January 1996. We firmly condemn this barbaric crime, and we sincerely hope that the murderers of these peaceable inhabitants, who included women and children, will receive the harshest punishment.

The Russian delegation has actively participated in preparing the draft resolution before us and believes that it is an important document that, along with the extension of the mandate of UNOMIG, contains important political provisions. It reaffirms the dedication of the international community to a settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia through political dialogue on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and to ensuring the rights of the multinational people of that country.

Naturally, we, like the other members of the Security Council, believe that the basic responsibility for ending the crisis through mutually acceptable compromises lies with the parties to the conflict themselves.

The situation of the negotiating process remains complex. No change of position that would allow for progress, particularly by the Abkhaz side, has yet taken place. We believe none the less that the potential for a

peaceful political settlement of the conflict has not yet been exhausted. As the facilitator for the negotiating process under the aegis of the United Nations, Russia has continued its vigorous efforts, in close consultation with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Georgia and his Deputy, to find ways to intensify the negotiating process. We are actively working to encourage the parties to be flexible in their approaches to a settlement.

We very sincerely hope that the forthcoming meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will contribute positively to a political settlement. The mandate of the CIS peace-keeping forces and the situation in the conflict zone as a whole will be discussed at that meeting.

We are increasingly concerned by the situation regarding the return of refugees and displaced persons. We consider it essential that the comprehensive and safe return of refugees be ensured. The solution of this problem will, to a great extent, determine progress on other problems involved in the settlement of the conflict. In the draft resolution, the Security Council firmly demands that the Abkhaz side accelerate significantly the process of return of refugees and that it guarantee the safety of returnees already in the area and of all persons in areas under its control. The Russian delegation assumes that Sukhumi will respond positively to this firm demand of the Security Council.

We note the draft resolution's positive assessment of cooperation between the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the collective CIS peace-keeping forces. We are convinced that the atmosphere of mutual trust and friendly relations that exists between United Nations and CIS peace-keepers is of key significance for the successful continuation of the peace-keeping operation in that region.

The President: I thank the representative of the Russian Federation for his kind words addressed to me. As he knows, my own appreciation to the outgoing presidency of the Russian Federation was expressed here on an earlier occasion.

Mr. Mano Queta (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): Since this is the first time my delegation has spoken at a formal meeting of the Council, allow me, Sir, to express our sincere congratulations on your accession to the presidency of the Council for this busy month of January. Your presidency coincides with the beginning of the term of my country, Guinea-Bissau, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the first time in its history. Your competence and experience are strong guarantees for the success of our work.

Allow me also to thank Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation for his excellent work during the month of December.

The situation in Georgia continues to deserve the Council's special attention. My delegation therefore wishes to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the report he has submitted. However, we note that despite the efforts made by his Special Envoy and his Deputy to bring Georgia and Abkhazia closer together, the peace process remains deadlocked. We note with regret that resurgent violence, looting and torture in the region of the Gali canal have greatly contributed to the deterioration of the situation of refugees and displaced persons.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, we note that nothing has changed since October 1995 and that, on the contrary, the situation could well worsen. Human rights and the dignity of the human person are constantly being violated. The most recent act of barbarism, in which nine people were brutally murdered, took place on 5 January, again in the Gali region.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, my country, Guinea-Bissau, reaffirms its dedication to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and congratulates the Georgian authorities on the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections last November, which it hopes will facilitate a political settlement of the conflict. We also wish to express our support for the six-month extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), given the very important role that the Mission continues to play.

Since the draft resolution before us fully responds to our concerns, my delegation will vote in favour of it in the hope that it will provide new impetus for strengthening the peace process in that region of the world.

In conclusion, I wish, with your permission, Mr. President, to express our gratitude to the Russian Federation as facilitator and to France as the coordinator of the Friends of Georgia.

The President: I thank the representative of Guinea-Bissau for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you sincerely, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the first month of 1996. I am convinced that, given your outstanding talent and rich diplomatic experience, the work of the Council this month will be a success. I also wish to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, who successfully guided the Council's work in the last month of last year, leading us smoothly into 1996.

We have noted that the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy have made tremendous efforts for the peaceful settlement of the Georgia conflict. The countries concerned in the region, the Russian Federation in particular, have also conducted positive mediation. We welcome the concerted efforts of the international community to advance the peace process in Georgia.

The situation in the Abkhaz region of Georgia has been tense and the political settlement process long stalemated, despite vigorous mediation by all parties, since the outbreak of the dispute in the region. The major problems remain the continued serious differences between the two parties concerned over the future political status of Abkhazia and the further obstruction of the return of refugees to the Abkhaz region. The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned about these disturbing developments.

We have consistently held that the international community should respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia in settling the conflict in that country. At the same time, the basic rights of various ethnic groups in the Abkhaz region should be guaranteed.

We are of the view that the final settlement of the question of Georgia depends, in the final analysis, on Georgians of all ethnic groups. In this connection, the international community can only play a supplementary and promoting role that is based on the political will of the two parties. Therefore, we urge the two parties concerned to take into account the fundamental interests of Georgians of all ethnic groups and to engage in real peace talks, earnestly and constructively, so as to find a final, proper solution.

Since its deployment, the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), has maintained good cooperation with the two parties concerned and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping force, and it has carried out fairly well the mandate entrusted to it by the Council, at which fact we wish to express our satisfaction. Therefore, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of UNOMIG, and we hope that it will further promote stability in Georgia and facilitate the process of a comprehensive political settlement.

On the basis of the aforementioned position, the Chinese delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before us.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Sriyono (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the duties of the President of the Security Council for the month of January and to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation on the many important issues currently before the Council. My delegation is confident that your demonstrated leadership qualities will enable the Council to make substantial progress.

I should also like to extend my congratulations to Ambassador Lavrov and his delegation for the exemplary way in which he presided over the work of the Council in the month of December.

The Indonesian delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for submitting the report on which our decision on extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) will be based. We also wish to express our gratitude to the Friends of Georgia for having prepared the draft resolution before us today.

A well-deserved tribute is also due to the personnel of UNOMIG, the peace-keeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Russian Federation for their combined contributions in deterring the further escalation of violence and for encouraging an environment conducive to reaching a political solution between the conflicting parties in Georgia.

The Indonesian delegation, however, is seriously concerned about the current situation in Georgia as it is described in the Secretary-General's report. The protracted yet deadlocked peace process can be understood only in the gravest of terms. My delegation therefore supports the efforts of Ambassador Brunner and

his Deputy, Mr. Bota, along with the efforts of the Russian Federation; they have made a valuable contribution to the peace process. With the prospects of any major breakthrough remaining bleak at this time, my delegation appeals to the parties to refrain from any actions that might exasperate this already dangerous and volatile situation, which is poignantly portrayed in deplorable humanitarian conditions in which looting, beatings and torture have become an intolerable aspect of everyday life for many people. Furthermore, we note that during the current period of UNOMIG's mandate, virtually no progress has been made concerning the serious issue of displaced persons, while at the same time the situation on the ground remains unsettled and tense, placing the peace-keeping forces in harm's way.

It is against this disappointing and frustrating background that my delegation strongly reaffirms the draft resolution's call for the parties to agree, without undue delay, to a framework that reflects the main tenets of this draft resolution for achieving a comprehensive political settlement to the crisis. In particular, we believe that the core elements of such a framework should be based on the premise of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and of the rights of the multi-ethnic people of that country.

My delegation is also of the view that as long as people are forced into eternal submission and deprived of their freedom of movement, enduring peace in Georgia will remain elusive. In this regard, we cannot but express our profound dissatisfaction with the Abkhaz authorities' continued position of intransigence facilitating an atmosphere that encourages the safe repatriation of displaced persons and refugees. In this connection, my delegation would like to recall the eighth preambular paragraph of the declaration of the 1994 CSCE Budapest summit, which condemns in no uncertain terms the use of ethnic violence. We therefore urgently request the Abkhaz authorities to accept the proposed timetable by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which would significantly accelerate the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons. In addition, we call on the Abkhaz authorities to take the appropriate steps to fully cooperate with all relevant institutions assisting in resolving this crisis — including the good offices of the Secretary-General and the Russian Federation — to promote the expeditious and safe return of refugees and displaced persons.

My delegation is hearted and encouraged by the close cooperation established between the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia and the Commonwealth of Independent States. It is patently clear that their presence has exerted a constructive and stabilizing influence which has prevented another outbreak of uncontrollable hostilities with the attendant consequences. We are pleased to learn that the quadripartite meetings have resumed and that biweekly formal meetings with international and non-governmental organizations relating to areas of mutual concern and security are taking place. We are also encouraged by the additional measures implemented by UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping forces in the Gali region. In this regard, we deem it imperative that the parties live up to their commitments to provide the United Nations and CIS personnel with security and freedom of access so that they can continue to discharge their urgent and important tasks with minimal disruption.

After careful consideration and thought, and in the light of the ominous circumstances that prevail in Georgia, my delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution before the Council today, which extends the UNOMIG mandate for an additional six-month period. We look upon the UNOMIG mission as constituting a vital element in the peace process, especially in the wake of the current polarization of the two parties. Furthermore, it is our conviction that this draft resolution accurately addresses the concerns identified in the Secretary-General's report. We caution, however, that while the draft resolution contains important instrumentalities for achieving a political solution to this crisis, a lasting peace cannot be imposed on the two parties. We therefore stress that the ultimate responsibility for arriving at a peaceful settlement rests with the two parties.

The President: I thank the representative of Indonesia for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you every success. You can count on our support. I must also pay tribute to Ambassador Lavrov of the Russian Federation, for his excellent stewardship of the Council during the month of December.

Since the civil war started in Abkhazia three years ago, the international community has made concerted efforts to find a solution to the constitutional crises in that region of Georgia, but such efforts have been thwarted by the self-declared Government of Abkhazia, which continues to reject proposals for a unitary state. We

sometimes wonder whether Security Council resolutions and presidential statements mean anything to the parties to the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, particularly to Mr. Ardzinba and his forces. The callousness with which the Abkhaz side treats the plight of the 250,000 refugees that they have expelled from their homes is most disheartening, to say the least.

We believe that it is time the Abkhaz authorities took the decisions of the Security Council regarding the peace process in Abkhazia seriously. Botswana believes that a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Georgia is still possible. The essential elements for such a settlement are already in place, and they include the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons, preservation of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia and a constitutional framework conferring a special status on Abkhazia. These elements have already been accepted by the Government of the Republic of Georgia, and the Abkhaz side should show its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict by doing likewise.

We are deeply disturbed by the level of violence and ethnic killings in the Gali region. Human rights violations, particularly towards the Georgian population in that region, cannot be allowed to continue with impunity. The Abkhaz authorities have a responsibility for the safety of all peoples in Abkhazia, irrespective of their ethnic origin. It is for this reason that we support the language of operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution before us, which calls upon on the Abkhaz leadership to ensure the protection of all persons in areas under its control.

The draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council within the next three months on the efforts of his Special Envoy and the Russian Federation as facilitator to find a solution to the Abkhaz problem. It is our fervent hope that this time substantive progress on both the political and refugee questions will be made so that peace and security can return to Georgia.

In conclusion, I wish to extend my delegation's sincere thanks to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Ambassador Brunner, and to the Government of the Russian Federation for their untiring efforts to find a solution to the Georgia-Abkhaz conflict.

The President: I thank the representative of Botswana for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Martínez Blanco (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are sure that with your vast experience and able guidance the work of the Council will be successful. We also wish to congratulate your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Lavrov, and his delegation on the excellent work they did this past December.

The recent report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, and the activities of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) indicates that, generally speaking, no progress has been made in the political negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia and that the peace process remains at a standstill.

It has not been possible to make any progress in overcoming the differences of the parties over a solution based on a federative state within the borders of Georgia and one based on a union between two equal states. This situation, in our view, adversely affects the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons.

My delegation believes that if the political dialogue between the parties is not resumed soon, the situation could continue to deteriorate, because, as the Secretary-General rightly pointed out in one of his earlier reports,

> "Situations of tense political deadlock prevent the development of the stability and public confidence necessary for economic assistance, reconstruction and a return to normalcy for the persons affected".

We believe that the parties must show that they are prepared to reach immediate agreement on the three sticking points that so far have blocked progress in the peace process: the return of refugees and displaced persons in conditions of safety; an agreement on a special status for Abkhazia; and the preservation of the territorial integrity of Georgia, which is supported by the international community. Accordingly, my delegation believes that the negotiating points formulated by President Shevardnadze and reflected in paragraph 8 of the report of the Secretary-General constitute an appropriate basis for the parties to reach a settlement. The parties must also comply with international humanitarian law and cooperate with UNOMIG, the peace-keeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in order to promote and accelerate the return of refugees and displaced persons or to legalize the situation of those

who have already returned, in keeping with the provisions of the Quadripartite Agreement of 4 April 1994.

My delegation believes that the measures taken by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in conjunction with the Government of Georgia and the Abkhaz authorities, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator and with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are of the utmost importance in order for the parties to resume negotiations with a view to achieving a broad political settlement of the conflict by means of a mutually acceptable protocol covering a status for Abkhazia within the borders of Georgia. My delegation acknowledges those efforts and fully supports them.

Despite the situation of insecurity and the existing tensions in various areas of the Abkhaz region, especially in Gali, and the restrictions on freedom of movement that continue to be imposed on the personnel of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia, UNOMIG continues fully to discharge its mandate and to cooperate satisfactorily with the peace-keeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States and with UNHCR. My delegation believes that so long as no concrete steps are taken towards the restoration of peace and stability in that region of the world, the presence of UNOMIG will be necessary. We agree that the Council should extend UNOMIG's mandate for an additional six-month period and that it should call upon the parties to achieve without delay substantive progress towards a broad political settlement of the conflict in the Abkhaz region.

Accordingly, we will vote in favour of the draft resolution.

The President: I thank the representative of Honduras for the kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me, Sir, to begin Egypt's first statement since its admission to membership in the Security Council by expressing our pleasure at seeing you preside over the work of the Council for this month. We are confident that thanks to your well-known diplomatic abilities and wide experience, the Council will conclude its work successfully. Allow me also to express the appreciation of the Egyptian delegation for the exemplary manner in which the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Ambassador Lavrov, conducted the work of the Council last month.

The Egyptian delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution for the following reasons.

First, it is important that the Council always take the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Secondly, we must encourage the parties concerned to reach a political settlement that would preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, with the contribution of the Russian Federation as facilitator, in consultation with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Brunner, and with the resident Deputy, Mr. Bota, and in coordination with the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

It is important for the Council to demand acceptance of a timetable, as the mandate of the monitoring group of monitors will end next June. It is important also for the Council to condemn strongly the killings and violations committed in Abkhazia, and it should request the Abkhaz side to ensure the safety of all persons in areas under its control.

Thirdly, it is important for the Council to request both parties, particularly the Abkhaz side, to accelerate the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons, particularly to the Gali region, according to a timetable based on the proposals made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Fourthly, both parties must be requested to cooperate fully with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and to facilitate its tasks in creating a safe environment for the return of refugees and displaced persons, including by not obstructing or impeding the movement of the United Nations force, particularly in the inspection of storage sites for heavy weapons.

In view of these considerations, we agree that the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) should be extended for six additional months and that the Council should review this mandate, in case any changes are made in the mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping forces at the forthcoming CIS summit meeting, which is scheduled for 19 January, or at any time before the termination of the UNOMIG mandate.

The draft resolution before us is stricter in tone than Security Council resolution 993 (1995). This is warranted, and the Council must take a firm stance

vis-à-vis the positions repeatedly taken by one party to the conflict — the party which ignores the resolutions of the Council — and must also support sincere efforts to reach a comprehensive political settlement that may achieve peace and stability for both parties.

The President: I thank the representative of Egypt for his kind words addressed to me.

I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1996/16.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Botswana, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1036 (1996).

I shall now call on those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Inderfurth (United States of America): May I begin, as other members of the Council have this afternoon, by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for January. We hope the work of the Council this month will be more tranquil than the weather we are experiencing outside. Under your able and experienced leadership, we have no doubt it will be. You will have our full cooperation in this regard. My delegation would also like to express its appreciation and admiration to Ambassador Lavrov and his delegation for their excellent work during the month of December. Finally, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express again its sincere welcome to the five new members of the Council. We look forward to working with all of them in the months ahead.

The United States would now like to take this opportunity to express its firm support for the extension of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). UNOMIG has served as a positive element in the international community's efforts to resolve the conflict in Georgia, and the United States is pleased that, through this resolution, UNOMIG will be able to continue operations over the next six months.

The United States deeply regrets the lack of progress between the parties in achieving a political solution to the conflict in Georgia. The resolution adopted today calls upon the parties, in particular the Abkhaz side, to achieve substantive progress without further delay towards a comprehensive political settlement. The Abkhaz side should take note that the Security Council has not wavered in its absolute support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. And yet, broad autonomy is available to the Abkhaz people — with their own parliament, constitution, courts and other state symbols — if they would negotiate within the parameters suggested by Special Envoy Brunner and the Russian Federation.

The Abkhaz-Georgian conflict created a quarter of a million refugees and displaced person. Only an insignificant trickle have returned to their homes. The resolution demands that the Abkhaz side accelerate significantly the voluntary return of the refugees. Moreover, the Council calls upon the Abkhaz, as a first step, to promote the return of refugees and displaced persons to the Gali region, a traditional Georgian area.

The human rights situation in Gali and throughout Abkhazia is of great concern. We support the efforts of Deputy Special Envoy Bota, working in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Ayala Lasso, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to establish a programme for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia. The pervasive lawlessness and incidents of ethnically based abuse throughout the security zone have had a destabilizing effect. The sort of killings described in the letter from the Ambassador of Georgia, although still under investigation, contribute to this instability and thus discourage the return of refugees and displaced persons.

The United States calls on all parties in Georgia to cooperate with UNOMIG and to allow its personnel to carry out their mission without interference or opposition. UNOMIG can maximize its contribution to bringing peace and stability in Georgia only if it can operate freely and with the cooperation of all parties to the cease-fire it is charged with monitoring.

The resolution just adopted contains a provision allowing the Security Council to review UNOMIG's

mandate if there are changes in the recently expired mandate of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping force operating in Georgia; we expect that the mandate of the CIS peace-keeping force will be renewed and that UNOMIG will consequently be able to maintain its operations as contemplated in the resolution. The United States would like to commend the excellent cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force and hopes that such cooperation will continue as long as both are operating in Georgia.

The resolution properly recognizes the positive effect of the presidential and parliamentary elections held in Georgia in November 1995, which resulted in the election of Eduard Shevardnadze as President.

Finally, the United States would like to express its appreciation to Special Envoy Brunner and to the Russian Federation, as facilitator, for their efforts and cooperative initiatives in trying to lead the parties to a negotiated settlement and also to resident Deputy Special Envoy Bota, whose fine work has had a positive effect on UNOMIG and its operations.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me.

I call on the representative of France.

Mr. Dejammet (France)(*interpretation from French*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and to congratulate you on the remarkably effective and precise manner in which you have been guiding our work. Allow me also to associate myself with the unanimous tribute which has been paid to your predecessor, Ambassador Lavrov for his effectiveness, celerity, determination and impartiality. Finally, I would like to welcome the five new members of this Council, whose presence among us gives me great pleasure.

The resolution, extending the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for six months was adopted as a presidential text. The French delegation approves this decision. Indeed, the unanimous support of the Council constitutes a serious message addressed to the parties.

A political solution to the conflict in Abkhazia is indispensable, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia, within its internationally recognized borders. Within that framework, Abkhazia must have an appropriate political status, and arrangements can be envisaged that fully guarantee the rights of the population of Abkhaz origin, in accordance with the highest standards defined by the international community.

Such is the unswerving position of our Council, and it has been determinedly reaffirmed here today.

From that point of view, our urgent appeal to the parties to make progress in the political negotiations as quickly as possible is addressed in particular to the Abkhaz side, which must shoulder its responsibilities and not gamble on one or another unlikely external circumstance in order to cling to its position of rejecting the facts.

The current efforts under United Nations auspices, with the support of the Russian Federation as facilitator, are the best way to reach a peaceful and equitable solution to the conflict that will respect the rights of all the region's populations. It is imperative that this way be pursued.

In another, equally important, area, the Council has attached particular importance to the tragic plight of the refugees and displaced persons. That the Abkhaz side is not respecting its undertakings to facilitate the return of refugees is unacceptable, as is the increased violence in the territories under Abkhaz control, which is aimed at preventing the return of any displaced persons. That is why the Council has used unprecedentedly firm language on these matters. We condemn all such violence and abuses, and we unequivocally recall the responsibilities of the Abkhaz side in the areas under its control.

The Council also demands with great firmness full respect for the commitments made by the Abkhaz side with respect to the return of refugees. Here, developments in the Gali region will test the good will of the Abkhaz side; the Council will follow with special attention the developments in that region, including the support of the parties for the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The establishment of machinery to monitor respect for human rights in the areas under Abkhaz control is another important demand by the Council, which unreservedly supports the efforts made under United Nations auspices. Concrete results must be achieved speedily.

The importance of all these pending tasks justified the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia for six months, subject to parallel changes that may be made in the mandate of the peace-keeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Close cooperation between UNOMIG and those forces is necessary; the French delegation is pleased at the excellence of contacts on the ground, and keenly encourages all initiatives to strengthen them.

France wishes also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the dedication of all the United Nations personnel involved in this difficult mission. We wish finally to express our gratitude and full support for the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Brunner, and his resident Deputy, Ambassador Bota, and for that of the Russian Federation.

The President: I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): This my delegation's first speech at a formal meeting of the Security Council since becoming a non-permanent member of the Council for the period 1996 to 1997. I thank all those representatives who have addressed words of welcome to the new members of the Council.

I wish also to put on record Chile's particular pleasure and complete confidence at seeing you, Sir, guiding the delicate work of the Security Council this month; we have already said this in an informal setting, but wished to reiterate it most emphatically in today's formal meeting. Before becoming a member of the Council we were able to witness the outstanding presidency of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and his delegation last month.

I welcome the presence here of the representative of Georgia and I thank him for his comments today.

We wish to express our complete support for the resolution the Council has just adopted.

We are grateful too for the recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, which is before the Council today.

We believe that, as other delegations have noted, it is deeply disturbing to note that despite the efforts made in recent years the peace process remains bogged down: as the Secretary-General says in his report, it is "at an impasse" (*S/1996/5, para. 40*). We regret even more that the situation on the ground remains tense and unstable, that ethnic killings and human rights violations by Abkhazia continue — the Council condemns these in paragraph 7 of the resolution it has just adopted — and that displaced persons and refugees continue to endure hardship. We condemn also incidents related to restrictions on the freedom of movement of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). Unreserved respect for the laudable work of the "Blue Helmets", for their safety and for their freedom of movement must be preserved under all circumstances.

As we express our concern today at the humanitarian situation and at the situation of refugees, we echo the concern expressed by the Government of Georgia last September during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, when it warned that the harsh conditions endured by more than 300,000 displaced persons scattered throughout the territory of Abkhazia — apart from constituting a heavy burden upon the entire country — are a factor for instability that blocks the consolidation of the peace process.

Thus, aware of the delicate situation in this regard faced by the Republic of Georgia, we wish to express our firm support for the activities of the Special Envoy and his resident Deputy, and for the initiatives of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Ayala Lasso, as well as for the cooperation in this regard of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which is developing a programme specifically to deal with these urgent tasks.

We acknowledge and are grateful for the important work carried out in recent years by the United Nations and by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); this has made it possible to contain the conflict, which could otherwise have had even more serious consequences for the entire region. We wish also to stress the special responsibility of the Russian Federation in the matter before the Council today, and to express special thanks for the persistent efforts that country has been making in the search for a solution acceptable to the parties.

Despite the pending problems, we believe that, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, there are some factors that could give reason for hope and that should enable the parties to overcome the present deadlock in the negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia. In that connection, President Shevardnadze has

offered Abkhazia a broad political status and its own Constitution compatible with that of the Federal State, in which what he calls the "Republic of Abkhazia" would have its parliament, supreme court, national anthem, state emblem and other symbols. We believe that these factors should be most seriously considered by the Abkhaz party with a view to making progress in the peace process. We hail the willingness of the Government of Georgia to undertake dialogue at all levels and indeed to engage in bilateral negotiations.

Likewise, we are confident that, at meetings to be held in the coming days by the Special Envoy and his resident Deputy with the authorities of the Russian Federation and their colleagues to review the situation and consider how to move forward in the political process, new light will be cast on how to overcome the present stagnation in the peace process.

For all those reasons, the delegation of Chile voted in favour of the draft resolution extending the mandate of United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia for a period of six months, until 12 July 1996.

I wish to thank all United Nations personnel for their outstanding work, and to convey to the Secretary-General our wish that he be so kind as to transmit to the people on the ground the gratitude of my delegation and of the many others who have also expressed such gratitude.

Although the Security Council meets far away from the scene of the events we are discussing today, and although we are not subject to the difficulties faced by the people in the field, I believe it is important that the personnel of the United Nations — civilian and military — should be aware of our solidarity with them and understanding of the difficult tasks and living conditions that they have to face.

The President: I thank the representative of Chile for his kind words addressed to me. The presidency will ensure that his remarks to the credit of the Secretariat are passed on to its members in the absence of their representative.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United Kingdom.

When this Council decided in July 1994 to increase the number of United Nations observers on the ground in Abkhazia on the basis of a significantly expanded mandate, at the same time it made clear the crucial importance of achieving progress towards a comprehensive political settlement. It also made it clear that that settlement was to respect fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. On each and every occasion since then on which this Council has discussed the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, it has reaffirmed the fundamental importance of those two principles. The international community has offered, and continues to offer, help, encouragement, assistance and advice to that end. The United Nations has played the leading role in those efforts and we are grateful for the patient and persistent work of Mr. Brunner and his staff. It is therefore deeply frustrating that 18 months later there has been so little progress towards that goal of a comprehensive political settlement.

But it is difficult to see how political negotiations can flourish in the face of the continued unwillingness of the Abkhaz leadership to face up to reality. The reality is that this Council remains unequivocally committed to Georgian territorial integrity. The reality is that this Council is deeply concerned by the Abkhaz leadership's continued obstruction of the orderly and voluntary return of refugees and its failure to ensure the safety of those who have returned to Abkhazia. And the reality is that the Abkhaz leadership's actions only serve to undermine further the situation of the very people whose interests it claims to represent. We appeal to the parties, but in particular to the Abkhaz leadership, not to squander the opportunity represented by the Cease-fire Agreement of May 1994 and to work urgently and sincerely towards settling a comprehensive political agreement. The Abkhaz leadership should not expect that opportunity to exist forever.

One of the reasons why that opportunity exists at present is the valuable work of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace-keeping force in helping to stabilize the situation on the ground. Without their efforts, the prospects of securing a comprehensive settlement would be very significantly diminished. That is why the United Kingdom supports the continuation of the presence of United Nations observers in Abkhazia, subject to the continuation of the CIS peace-keeping force. We hope that the CIS summit on 19 January will indeed confirm the extension of the presence of CIS peace-keepers. It is most welcome that cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peace-keeping force continues to be satisfactory. The United Kingdom is one of the main contributors of personnel to UNOMIG, and our thanks go to the Chief

Military Observer, Major General Källström, and to the members of UNOMIG for their work. The recent incidents detailed in the Secretary-General's report remind us, however, of the ever present threat to those carrying out this work, and it is vital that the parties recognize their responsibilities to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of UNOMIG and CIS personnel. However, the parties, in particular the Abkhaz leadership, should not forget that UNOMIG's presence is a means to an end, and not an end in itself. That is why it is essential that there be significant progress, both in the political negotiations and on the return of refugees, in the coming months if the international community's efforts are not to be wasted.

I resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no further speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.